Monitoring Dietary Transitions for healthy and accountable food environments: Efforts from Ghana

Systèmes alimentaires en Afrique et en Méditerranée
Comment co-construire des solutions
pour une sécurité alimentaire et une santé durables?

Montpellier, France

Nov 7th - 9th 2022
Disclosures: No conflict of interest
Ghana: population of ~32 million people spanning a variety of religious, ethnic, and linguistic groups.

Food insecurity and undernutrition has reduced but Ghana continues to face a triple burden of malnutrition

- **Food insecurity**: 12% nationally, 18% rural population, 6% urban (2020)
- **Stunting (National)**: 28% (2008) to 18% (2018)
- **Stunting (Northern region)**: 33%
- **Anaemia**: 45% of women of reproductive age, 66% of children, 6-59 months (2014)
- **Obese or overweight**: 41% of women, 15-49 y (2016, modelled estimates)
- **Min dietary diversity**: 60% of women, 15-49y, 17% of children, 6-23months (2020)
Local Ghanaian foods

A typical Ghanaian diet largely relies on starchy roots (eg cassava, yams), local fruits (eg mango, plantain) and cereals (eg maize, rice).

Starchy roots and cereals still supply almost 75% of the dietary energy

Pulses feature in many diets
Local Ghanaian foods
Local Ghanaian diets

• To the uninitiated tongue Ghanaian dishes are spicy

Tuo zaafi

Waakye

Kenkey
Local Ghanaian diets

Plantain Ampesi

Fufu

Banku
Indigenous fruits – (slide courtesy of F. Smith)
Rapid urbanization has modified food consumption patterns in urban areas, with an increasing demand for imported food.
Diets are transitioning

- Ghana is experiencing a nutrition transition with some evidence of transitioning dietary habits related to urban demographic change.

- As a consequence, obesity and DR-NCDs are rapidly increasing and have been designated by the MOH as an important public health problem.
Overweight/obesity/NCDs are rising

Overweight+Obesity among Ghanaian Women

Data from the DHS, Ghana
Overweight/obesity/NCDs are rising
Driven by unhealthy food environments, NCDs are predicted to become the leading cause of death in Ghana by 2030.

Concerned, we aimed to address the problem of NCDs through effective public health policy measures.

But would soon be reminded that longstanding challenges needed to be addressed first
Address longstanding challenges

• Data poverty – address via research

• Policy inertia – address using advocacy

• Policy focus – a shift from feeding to nourishing

• Policy coherence – landscaping analysis & bundling policies for impact

• ...and so we took a step back -
  “doing the wrong thing at the right time is wrong; doing the right thing at the wrong time is wrong”

• Generate evidence, curate same, and avail it to Ghanaian researchers, policy makers, and civil society
Critical roles of Prof. Michelle Holdsworth & Dr. Stefanie Vandevijvere

Dietary Transitions in Ghanaian Cities project (DFC) & Dietary Transitions in African Cities project (TACLED), among others mapped the factors in the social and physical food environments that drive consumption of energy dense nutrient-poor food and beverages.
Engaged individuals, communities, local & national stakeholders

1. People in their communities: How are unhealthy food and beverages embedded in everyday life? Dietary intake and time use study (Holdsworth et al 2020)

2. What are the factors shaping dietary behaviours? Photovoice study (Pradeilles et al 2021)

3. What are dietary behaviours in urban Ghana and Kenya? Systematic review (Rousham et al 2020)


5. Communities & neighbourhoods: How is food sold and advertised? Geographical mapping study (Green et al 2020)

6. How ready are urban Ghanaian communities to reduce unhealthy food and beverage consumption? Community Readiness mapping study (Pradeilles et al 2019)

7. Priorities for national action: What are the priorities for policy and interventions to improve diets at a national level? Benchmarking food environments with Food-Epi (Laar et al 2020)
Food-EPI scorecard—where does Ghana stand?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Level of Implementation in relation to international best practices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food Composition</strong></td>
<td>Food composition standards/targets for processed foods</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Food Labelling</strong></td>
<td>Ingredient lists / nutrient declarations</td>
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<td>Regulatory systems for health and nutrition claims</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Food Promotion</strong></td>
<td>Restrict promotion of unhealthy foods to children in broadcast media</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Restrict promotion of unhealthy foods to children in non broadcast media</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Food Prices</strong></td>
<td>Reduce taxes on healthy foods</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Increase taxes on unhealthy foods</td>
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<td>Existing food subsidies favour healthy foods</td>
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<td>Food-pipelated income-support is for healthy foods</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Food Provision</strong></td>
<td>Policies in schools/easy education promote healthy food choices</td>
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<td>Support and training systems (public sector settings)</td>
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<td><strong>Food Retail</strong></td>
<td>Zoning laws on density/location of healthy/unhealthy outlets</td>
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<td><strong>Food Trade and Investment</strong></td>
<td>Trade agreement impacts assessed</td>
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<td>Protect regulatory capacity regarding nutrition</td>
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<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td>Strong visible political support</td>
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<td>Population intake targets established</td>
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<td>Food-based dietary guidelines implemented</td>
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<td>Comprehensive implementation plan linked to national needs</td>
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<td><strong>Governance</strong></td>
<td>Use of evidence in food policies</td>
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<td>Transparency for the public in the development of food policies</td>
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<td>Access to government information</td>
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<td><strong>Monitoring and Intelligence</strong></td>
<td>Monitoring food environments</td>
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<td>Monitoring nutrition status and intakes</td>
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<td>Monitoring using anthropometric measurements</td>
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<td>Regular monitoring NCD risk factors and prevalence</td>
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<td>Sufficient evaluation of major policies/programmes</td>
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<td>Monitoring progress on reducing health inequalities</td>
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<td><strong>Funding and Resources</strong></td>
<td>Funding for population nutrition promotion</td>
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<td>Research funding targeted to obesity and NCD prevention</td>
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<td>Health promotion agency</td>
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<td><strong>Platforms for Interaction</strong></td>
<td>Coordination mechanisms (national and local govt)</td>
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<td>Platforms government and civil society</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Health-in-e-policy</strong></td>
<td>All government policies are sensitive to nutrition</td>
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Laar et al 2020
Addressing the challenges

Implementation of healthy food environment policies to prevent nutrition-related non-communicable diseases in Ghana: National experts’ assessment of government action

Amos Laar\textsuperscript{a},\textsuperscript{a,}\textsuperscript{b}, Amy Barnes\textsuperscript{c}, Richmond Aryeetey\textsuperscript{a}, Akua Tandoh\textsuperscript{a}, Kristin Bash\textsuperscript{d}, Kobby Mensah\textsuperscript{e}, Francis Zotor\textsuperscript{c}, Stefanie Vandeven\textsuperscript{f}, Michelle Holdsworth\textsuperscript{a,\textsuperscript{b}}

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\textsuperscript{f} Centre for Sustainable Development, INRA, Montpellier, France
IDRC-funded MEALS4NCDs Project measures & supports public sector actions that create healthy food marketing, retail, and provisioning environments for Ghanaian children

Laar et al. 2021 or https://meals4ncds.org
Additional policy-influencing evidence

- **Study 1**: Assessing the nature and extent of unhealthy foods and non-alcoholic beverage promotion on television
- **Study 2**: Mapping of outdoor food advertising and outlets within and around selected basic schools in the Greater Accra region
- **Study 3**: Assessing the healthiness of outdoor food advertising within and around public sector basic schools
- **Study 4**: How healthy are our supermarkets? Availability of ultra-processed foods in supermarkets of selected districts in the Greater Accra region
- **Study 5**: Analysis of Food Provisioning Policies and Programmes in Ghanaian public sector basic schools
- **Study 6**: The nutritional quality of foods and beverages sold or provided in child-serving institutions
- **Study 7**: Network Mapping of Stakeholders in Food Promotion and Provisioning among children in schools in Ghana
- **Study 8**: The readiness of Ghanaians community to implement changes to improve children’s food environments in the Greater Accra
STATE OF FOOD ENVIRONMENTS IN THE GREATER ACCRA REGION

An assessment and recommendations

MEALS4NCDs project
A broad range of stakeholders engaged

Gov’t policy makers, regulators, MDAs, Law makers, UN agencies (UNICEF, WHO), CSOs, Consumer Protection Associations, Researchers (local & international)

Law Makers, Member Parliamentary Select C’ttee on Health & Leader of CAPH A

Amos Laar, PhD
Restricting the Marketing of Unhealthy Food to Ghanaian Children

- Comprehensive policy that regulates unhealthy food and beverage advertising across all media platforms
- Improving the Nutritional Quality of Sold and Provided Foods in Ghanaian Schools: Priority Recommendations for Policymakers and Key Stakeholders

DEVELOPING A FOOD POLICY PACKAGE FOR HEALTHIER DIETS IN GHANA: A CONSULTATIVE MEETING

POST-MEETING REPORT
30TH SEPTEMBER, 2021

CONVENERS
The meeting was convened by the Ministry of Health (MOH), the Measurement, Evaluation, Accountability and Leadership Support for NCDs prevention (MEALS4NCDs) Project, and the Coalition of Actors for Public Health Advocacy (CAPHA).

PLACE AND DATE OF MEETING
The meeting was held virtually on Zoom on the 30th of September, 2021.

MEETING PARTICIPANTS
A total of 62 stakeholders were present at the meeting. The stakeholders included relevant government sectors - Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Ghana’s Development Partners including United Nations Organisations, as well as local academics and international subject experts.
News Updates

Ghana tackles non-communicable diseases through healthier diets

Healthier Diets for Healthy Lives Project launched in Accra

Suboptimal Diets contributes to various diseases-Hon. Agyeman Manu

Health Minister launches Healthier Diets for Healthy Lives (HD4HL) Project in Accra
A deliberate mix of low agency & high agency policies
“inform and empower”
“guide and influence”
“incentivize, discourage or restrict” patronage of unhealthy diets.

Policy Bundle

- **Labeling System**
  - Bold, truthful information for all consumers

- **Public Procurement/Food Provision**
  - Food in public institutions favors healthy foods

- **Fiscal Policy**
  - Adjusts relative price, revenue neutral or positive, equitable

- **Marketing Regulation**
  - Clear standards address deception, change norms, protect vulnerable segments

- **Food Retail Policy**
  - Increase availability of healthy food and reduce availability of unhealthy food in retail env't

- **Food Composition Policy**
  - To minimize energy density & nutrients of concern in processed foods

**Nutrient Profiling Model (NPM)**
Open, transparent system for classifying foods as healthy or unhealthy and informing policy

**Increased consumption of healthy foods**

**Decreased consumption of unhealthy foods**

**Improved food environment**

**Healthier lives**

**IDRC CRDI**
International Development Research Centre
Centre de recherches pour le développement international

**The Rockefeller Foundation**

**Canada**

[https://hd4hl.org/](https://hd4hl.org/)
The peculiar heterogeneity of the African food environment and its variegated political economies are noteworthy….

Facing a syndemic of undernutrition, overweight/obesity and other diet-related NCDs, enforcing policies that dis-incentivize consumption of unhealthy diets, but also those that avail healthy/nutrient-rich foods are important.
Accountability systems are, however, nascent and need to be strengthened to support government stewardship, and civil society to hold food environment actors to account.
Advocating for Health (A4H) Project invites you to a mega float

Theme: Sugar Sweetened Beverages are harmful to your health

Date: 20th July 2022  Time: 8.00am

Jubilee Park, Tamale

SAY NO TO SUGAR SWEETENED BEVERAGES

MEGA FLOAT

WEDNESDAY 26 OCT. 2022

Principal streets of Kumasi

Saying no to sugar sweetened beverages.